

Resistances and the optimisation of the Scottish education system

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In 2016 the OECD published 'Improving Schools in Scotland' (OECD, 2016). The re-view made a strong case for a new evaluation framework to measure performance across all system levels, including 'direct measures' of school curriculum effectiveness, pupil attainment and teacher performance.

The Scottish Government responded by creating the 'National Improvement Framework' (NIF; Scottish Government, 2016), which, as recommended, gathers data on all aspects of the education system. Central to this was a re-introduction of pupil standardized assessments, which was strongly opposed by teachers across Scotland. Of equal concern was a move to measure teacher performance and the development of new governance and accountability structures (Scottish Government, 2017).

The OECD review explicitly overlooks teachers as actors of knowledge creation, instead highlighting the potential for 'independent agencies' to gather evidence on the system. It is therefore unsurprising that the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has become a dominant player in education reform. Despite this, the 'teacher research' trend (Wall, 2018) has picked up considerable momentum, with many schools choosing to develop their own teacher-led research hubs. We draw on documentary analysis of policy discourse to position teacher opposition to standardized assessment and the teacher research movement as forms of resistance to the optimization of the Scottish education system.

Keywords: Scotland, school curriculum, optimization, effectiveness, pupil attainment

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